labour cost is 2—4 per cent. It indicates that our labour cost is much more, compared to other steel plants. Therefore, in order to rightsize the manpower, the Voluntary Retirement Scheme was introduced. Initially, in 1998-1999 and in 1999-2000, this scheme was introduced, on deferred payment basis. Under that scheme, the SAIL had not incurred any cash flow because the employees were paid every month, on deferred payment basis. But, after that, in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001, a new scheme, as per the DPE guidelines, was introduced. Under that scheme, the Government is giving guarantee a loan, to the extent of Rs. 1,500 crores, and the Government is also allowing an interest subsidy of 50 per cent. That is why the SAIL has availed of this loan and is offering voluntary retirement to its employees. Sir, by 2003, the expected expenditure on this would be about Rs. 1,000 crores.

श्री गांधी आज़ाद: महोदय, मंत्री जी ने अपने उत्तर में 26,102 कर्मचारियों को स्वैच्छिक सेवा निवृत्ति हेतु 31.3.2003 तक एक हजार करोड़ रुपया भुगतान करने की आशा की है। मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि जब स्वैच्छिक सेवा निवृत्ति के लिए एक हजार करोड़ रुपए का भुगतान किया जाएगा तो क्या जो सेल चल रहा है, उसकी चल पूंजी प्रभावित होगी या नहीं? अगर उसकी चल पूंजी प्रभावित होगी तो उसको प्रभावहीन करने के लिए सरकार ने क्या उपाय किए हैं?

श्री बृज किशोर त्रिपाठी: मान्यवर सदस्य ने जो कहा है, तो सेल की प्राफिटेबिलिटी और उसको ज्यादा कंपटीटिव बनाने के लिए वीआरएस स्कीम इंट्रोड्यूस की गयी है। सरकार ने इसको एप्रूव किया है, कैबिनेट ने एप्रूव किया है। जो बिजिनेस रीस्ट्रक्चरिंग की योजना है, जो फाइनेंस रीस्ट्रक्चरिंग योजना है, इसके अंतर्गत इस योजना को कर रहे हैं। वीआरएस स्कीम इसके अंतर्गत है, बिजिनेस रीस्ट्रक्चरिंग योजना के अंतर्गत है। इसमें सेल को ज्यादा फायदा होगा, ज्यादा लाभ मिलेगा। इसीलिए यह वालंटरी रिटायरमेंट स्कीम सेल में इंट्रोड्यूस की गयी है।

*284. [The Question Shri S. Ramachandran Pillai was absent for answer *vide* page 26 infra]

*285. [The Question Dr. Arun Kumar Sarma was absent for answer *vide* page 27 infra]

Flood damage in Kerala

*286. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have extended special assistance towards flood damage caused due to South-West Monsoon, set in Kerala on 25th May, 2001;

(b) the estimated damage in different sectors due to the flood havoc;

(c) the magnitude of damage assessed by the Central Team;

(d) whether Government released the assistance recommended by the Central Team;

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(f) whether Government would consider releasing financial assistance recommended therein?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) to (f) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) to (f) Following heavy rains on 8th and 9th July, 2001, a number of districts including Kannur, Idukki, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Ernakulum were affected by floods.

According to the State Government, 119 human lives were lost, 1352 villages were affected, resulting in evacuation of 35,000 people. Around 1700 bunds were damaged, cropped area of 0.40 lakh hectares was affected. Damage was also reported to a number of Highways and Roads.

Services of Armed Forces and Central Para-Military Forces were made available to assist in search and rescue operations. A Central Team was deputed to assess the extent of damage and assistance required. The amount found admissible as per the prescribed items and rates of assistance from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) were within the available balances of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) of the State. The High Level Committee of Ministers, accordingly, did not approve any allocation from the NCCF.

A sum of Rs. 26.47 crores was released to the State as advance Central Share of its CRF. Allocation of 5,000 MTs of rice was made available free of cost.

No further assistance to the State Government is due for these floods as there are still adequate balances in its CRF.

SHRI N. K. PREMACHANDRAN: Sir, in the last monsoon season in Kerala, the rains caused heavy damages. I remember, a Central team was deputed by the Government of India to look into it and assess the damage. The Central team has submitted its report to the Government of India, but, so far, no relief has been given to the State of Kerala which suffered huge damages. Sir, it is to be noted

that the then Agriculture Minister, Nitish Kumarji, is sitting here. He visited the State of Kerala and had a meeting with the Chief Minister, the Ministers and the M.P.s from Kerala there. He had assured that something would be done after looking into the case. Subsequently, the Chief Minister, the Revenue Minister and all the M.P.s from Kerala had a meeting with the present Agriculture Minister, and he had assured that adequate relief would be given to the State of Kerala so as to compensate the State.

The answer which he has given to us is, the National Calamity Contingency Fund, NCCF, and the Calamity Relief Fund, CRF, were being compared. Funds for Kerala have been allocated under the Calamity Relief Fund. The reason for the non-allocation of funds from the NCCF has been that since there is adequate Calamity Relief Fund with the State, there no further assistance due to the State.

My first supplementary to the hon. Minister is this: The CRF that had been given to Kerala has already been exhausted. An assurance was given to the Revenue Minister that when the CRF is exhausted, the position would be reviewed and assistance would be given. If that be the case, I would like to know whether the Minister would clarify the postition with regard to the further assistance to Kerala, when the CRF is exhausted.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: A Central team visited Kerala, and their recommendation is that there are enough funds available with the State. According to the norms laid down for National Calamity Contingency Fund, all the fund under the CRF should be exhausted first; but, here, the fund is still available with the State. It has not been spent and, hence, there is no need to release further funds from the Contingency Fund.

SHRI N. K. PREMACHANDRAN: My specific point was whether the CRF has been exhausted. To my limited knowledge, the CRF has been exhausted in the State. If the CRF has been exhausted, I would like to know whether further assistance would be allowed.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: The Calamity Relief Fund is provided for certain type of problems that occur because of a calamity. Norms for the release of funds from the National Calamity Contingency Fund are laid down. If the CRF money is spent, then the money would be given from the National Calamity Contingency Fund. It is true. But our committee report states that there are enough funds available with the State.

SHRI N. K. PREMACHANDRAN: During the same monsoon season, relief from NCCF was given to so many other States, like Orissa, Gujarat. If that were the case, the non-allocation of funds from NCCF to the State of Kerala is a discriminatory approach on the part of the Centre towards the State of Kerala.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: Funds from the NCCF are allocated after teams are sent to the States. The group of Ministers meets, and, on the basis of the norms, the funds are allocated. I can assure the Member that there is no discrimination against Kerala or any other State, for that matter. Very strict norms have been laid down as to what kind of expenses are allowed under the National Calamity Contingency Fund. Reconstruction work is not really allowed. According to the Eleventh Finance Commission's report, the damage caused to the infrastructure is not allowed under the National Calamity Contingency Fund; that would be met from the Plan expenditure.

Basic facilities in primary schools in rural A.P.

*287 DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have conducted any survey to find out the number of primary schools in rural Andhra Pradesh which do not have school buildings, class rooms and basic facilities like benches, drinking water and toilets;

(b) if so, the findings thereof, district-wise; and

(c) the remedial measures Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) Yes Sir. A survey was conducted as a part of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP).

(b) The Govt. of Andhra Pradesh have furnished the findings of the above survey which are enclosed. (*See* below)